

## Mistake in the Determination of the Order of the Battle

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### Abstract

This essay discusses the Vietnam War from the perspective of the strategist, and with focus on men-power, which is part of the concept of 'order of the battle'. The interest is progressing toward determining best methods for the calculation of estimates of this type to decrease mistake in wars that involve various nations. Upon studying the debate involving the estimates for the Vietnam War, period ranging from 1965 to 1968, the conclusion is that there were gross mistakes from the part of the military, and methods of producing the order of the battle have to be much better examined. Systems of decision, and management deserve revision, so that what has happened during the Vietnam War does not repeat: important is saving human lives, not the prestige of individual institutions or even the amount of negative criticism that is made publicly available about them. National forces must mean also Academia, and there is a chance that Academia can improve those systems by much if governmental authorities acknowledge its existence in all sectors of the national life. The best strategy is still including the dissident group or person, not facing them as an enemy, when it comes to those who are regarded by the general public as part of the national forces.

**Keywords:** Order of the battle, Vietnam war, strategy, government, guilt

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### I. INTRODUCTION

In November of 1967, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimated the men-power of the guerrillas plus regular combatants from Vietnam to be between 188,000, and 208,000 (Central Intelligence Agency 2019, p. 2).

The Military Assistance Command Vietnam - MACV (Lester 1988, p. xiii) - estimated it to be 259,000 - guerrillas with 59,000 - by 1968 instead (MACV 1968, p. 89).

What is referred to here is the Order of the Battle (OB), which is defined by the government as 'the identification, strength, command structure, and disposition of the personnel, units, and equipment of any military force. Also called OB; OOB' (Office of the Secretary of Defense 2019, p. 164).

Whilst Americans endured very meaningful losses (probably around 350,000 people), the Vietnamese still die on a daily basis: their feet step over a ground mine, and their limbs or lives are gone forever [(Schneck 1998, p. 5), (Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation 2011, para. 1)].

There is a difference of 50,000 between the estimates of the MACV, and that of the CIA, and MACV's is the highest (259,000).

A correct order of the battle means a correct path of action for the most powerful nation, and therefore optimised win, which has to mean lowest rates of human losses, and that has to be part of the set of the most important objectives of the United Nations, even if that objective is not isolated with frequency by academic authors (Hultman et al 2013, p. 875).

Development brings a discussion on the dimension of the impact of the missing 50,000 for America, and what could be forming a solution to decrease the gap between one, and another OB to at most a few thousands; less than ten. Of interest is the method used for the counting. In Conclusions, a method of counting is recommended, and a summary of results is presented. The sources are then listed within References.

The methods used in this research were common core extraction (Linkedin Corporation 2019), classical logic entailment (Pinheiro 2017, pp. 37-43), and Bloom's taxonomy analysis & synthesis (Pinheiro 2015, p. 136).

### II. DEVELOPMENT

The Vietnamese loss with the conflict was 150,000 people per annum [(Blankenship 2013, p. 95), (Wirtz 1991, p. 247)], so at least 3,000,000 people.

The Vietnam War went from 1954 to 1975, says Britannica Encyclopaedia (2019): 21 years. Since then, and until 2019, more than 10,000 people died, and more than 12,000 got injured by Unexploded Ordnance, UXO (UNHCR 2019, para. 6): ammunition that has been fired, but malfunctioned (Department of Defence

2019, para. 1). 100,000 were killed or hurt by landmines, leftovers from the war, up to 2011 (Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation 2011, para. 1).

From 1965 to 1968, America lost 47,244 people (Bright 2001, p. 23), what should point at a total loss close to 350,000, but the total American loss with the war was about 60,000 instead (National Archives 2019, para. 8): that proves that the period from 65 to 68 contained the largest amount of American mistakes.

The most popular theory on these remarkable mistakes is that to be blamed is the OB totals: that is said by both academics, and non-academics [(Pike 2019), (Adams 1975), (Wirtz 1991), (Blankenship 2013)].

Blankenship (2013) thinks that the MACV may have conspired to hide higher numbers from the Johnson Administration, and the public' (p. 94), so that he suggests that the Vietnamese had more men-power than the MACV was communicating to the American government, and the MACV was then intentionally hiding that information, so that they were making America lose more of its people in the battle by misleading the American government, and therefore making more of those under their command lose their lives in an intentional manner. That point is also made by Adams (Wirtz 1991, p. 239).

Proving Blankenship's & Wirtz's point demands proving, number one, that the totals in men-power of the OB were meaningfully inferior to the actual men-power in the battlefield, and, number two, that they were unreasonable when the information MACV had access to back then is considered.

'In January 1965, Saigon had 245,000 people in its regular forces, 99,000 in its regional forces, 165,000 in the popular forces, and 31,500 national police' (Cosmas 2012, p. 203): actual presence in the battlefield.

The count was then 245,000 in reality (Pike 2019, para. 5), and therefore a number that is almost the same as that from the MACV.

If Pike (2019) thinks that the actual count was 245,000, what should be counted is only regular forces. That leaves out 295,500 people according to Cosmas (2012, p. 203), but is only 14,000 less than the MACV's figure.

Sam Adams, a top CIA analyst, who graduated in Harvard, made his own calculations, and ended up with an estimate that was shockingly superior to that of the MACV: 600,000 people (Wirtz 1991, p. 247). That agreed almost in full with the description of the situation made by Cosmas (2012, p. 203), but disagreed with the MACV's by 341,000. George Carver, Adams' boss inside of the CIA, supported Adams by saying that the MACV estimates were too low, and had to be raised to perhaps twice as much when speaking to the director of the CIA, Richard Helms, and the national security adviser of the president, Walt Rostow (Wirtz 1991, p. 248). Rostow then spoke to general Earle Wheeler, and they organised a conference to discuss the OB for February of 1967 (Wirtz 1991, p. 248). As a result of that meeting, colonel Gains Hawkins, who was in charge of the calculations in the MACV's group, agreed with raising estimates to 500,000 (Wirtz 1991, p. 248). In May of 1967, the CIA issued another estimate, worded things in an unpleasant way for the MACV ('in contrast with the MACV Order of the Battle, (...) an accurate estimate for this category', 'half-million range'), and that started the debate again (Wirtz 1991, p. 248). The MACV defended that both the VC secret defense, and secret self-defense forces, which were the units whose counting Adams strongly criticised, should not be considered when measuring enemy strength (Wirtz 1991, p. 249). CIA rejected their move, and said being realistic implied considering those (Wirtz 1991, p. 249). The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) supported the MACV through a series of arguments, and one of them had to do with the impossibility of accurately calculating the self-defense militia figures, which seemed to have clandestine nature, so that all would be speculation (Wirtz 1991, pp. 247-249). Yet another argument had to do with the nature of the groups included in the counting: MACV believed that the assault youth, and the self-defense units did not have combat capabilities, and one way to see that was acknowledging the presence of women, and old people in them (Wirtz 1991, p. 249-250). The MACV believed public, and media criticism would be the result if they increased their estimate in a meaningful way because of their updates on the war results: incompetence, and deceit claims could easily emerge (Wirtz 1991, p. 250). The CIA believed that leaving those figures out would 'undermine the allied war effort' instead (Wirtz 1991, p. 251).

Since the name defense force makes anyone from the general public think those would definitely be deployed in a war - it implies an attacker (Rollyson & Paddock 2016, p. 193) - the assumptions of the MACV were highly unreasonable. Because of the actual figures of the battle, the mistake was evident. In this case, the discussion obliges us to support the thinking of Blankenship & Wirtz, and, therefore, MACV has acted against the interest of the nation it claims to defend, as in treason, since that is equivalent to helping the enemy (House of Representatives Committees 2019, pp. 39-40).

It is however plausible to think that there is another way of viewing things, since 'the *raison d'être* of any national armed force is to defend the state' (Clarke, J 2019, para. 4). Many authors would have defended the MACV, and their decisions (Słowiak 2015, pp. 59-68), and consideration must be given to those, but the method of logical entailment here used assures us that enough has been discussed in this article about all actors involved for us to be able to support the inferences provided as conclusions.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

The officially-accepted version of the OB had gross mistakes in calculation, and those were generated because of the incapacity of the military of taking as a directive privileging humanity over self-interest. A difference of about 300,000 in enemy power is what happened there, and the toll for America was the highest during the Vietnam War.

America lost about 60,000 people in the battlefield for the enemy during the full 21 years of armed conflict, and there is an excess with the loss, if average figures in the 21 years are considered, of about 38,670 people, or 13% of the mistake with the figures of estimation of enemy power, during the period of 3 years that goes from 1965 to 1968.

The strategy that should have been the winner, when it came to preparing a final OB, is accepting the calculations of experienced intelligence analysts if those are different from the military's, probably because they usually work with predictions that include a full range of human factors that is never considered by the military, things like change of character in a population, so from passive to aggressive, and from individualistic to munched. Besides, there should be no room for vanity when the future of human kind or preservation of human life is on the table: healthy criticisms should be present in any human activity, and, if someone committed a mistake, perhaps they deserve having their ears or the ears of the group they represent pulled by both the public, and the top authorities.

Groups should always have an allowance for new members, and the MACV should simply have invited Sam Adams to join their managerial team on the occasion, so after he was able to perform better calculations, and come up with a better estimate. It seems that nobody actually disagreed, in the military, with Adam on the figures presented, since nobody was able to prove those were equivocated: what was used as argument was always something else. In this case, yet another national force that is little used should have been included, and that is Academia: there would then be an ample, but very efficient, discussion on methods, definitions, and all else, what would be way less costly to the nation, and way more efficient.

In terms of methods, it is clear that lots of work need to be done: whether defense forces will be counted or not, whether women are considered non-combatants by default, and the age at which one is too old to fight in a war are basic queries for most people. In principle, just the name, defense forces, justifies including those in the counting during the preparation of an OB, so that the general public tends to believe Blankenship's & Wirtz's accusations involving the military even though those would also initially come across as nonsensical, like why would the military of a nation wish for the people they defend to be eliminated in higher volumes?

It is however still reasonable to think that everyone in the military, especially during war times, would respect hierarchy in a blind manner, since that is the way they are trained, the needs of a war, and so on, so that it is possible to have a top manager of the forces who sells himself to the enemy forces or was always with them (Maslov 2000, pp. 86-138), and even a compromised person occupying a position of top manager (New Statesman 2019), so say someone who has been bugged with a horizontal CIA bug (Pinheiro 2019), which is based on Jose Delgado's technology (Marzullo 2017, pp. 29-35), and allows for the entire MKULTRA range of programs to be run on a human entity, including memory editing, brainwashing, neuroprogramming, Manchurian candidate, and so on (Pinheiro 2019b).

Despite the impression that remains due to the results here attained, there is a lot of room to defend the MACV, and some have already put great amount of effort in that direction. It has to be possible to develop much stronger argumentation in favour of MACV's work, thinking, and decisions during those so critical moments of the world history.

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